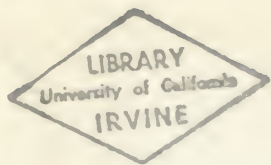


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THE LOGIC OF HISTORY

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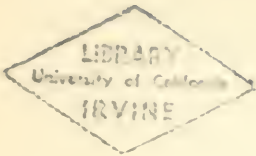
EDITED BY C. JOHNSON, M.A., AND J. P. WHITNEY, B.D., D.C.L.

THE
LOGIC OF HISTORY

BY
C. G. CRUMP

LONDON:
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

1919



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THE LOGIC OF HISTORY

ἅπανθ' ὁ μακρὸς κἀναρίθμητος χρόνος
φύει τ' ἄδηλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται.

SOPHOCLES: *Ajax*, 646 sq.

ἀρχὴ γὰρ τὸ ὅτι.—ARISTOTLE: *Eth. Nic.*, I. 4.

I.—HISTORY AS A SCIENCE

THE historian who would claim for his study a place among the sciences must be prepared to meet certain criticisms, and to acknowledge certain difficulties. The common conception of a science involves the notion of accurate formulæ, known as natural laws, giving accurate results derivable from these principles; and this suggests the criticism that as human action is infinitely variable, no certain results can be obtained in a study founded upon it. This theory would therefore confine history to narrative and refuse any attempt to discover any principles behind the drama. The student of natural science knows better than to make such a criticism. He is aware of the limitations of his invariable laws, and of the defects of his methods; and if he were to endeavour to exclude history from the sciences, he would

probably base his exclusion upon the statement that the laws of human conduct are so imperfectly known that the methods employed in discussing them must be widely different from those that he is accustomed to employ. And yet Economics, Psychology, and Anthropology have one by one crept into the guarded circle; and it is difficult to insist that History may not follow them, and that historians may not look to their logic and try to establish their general principles as eagerly and as accurately as any other students. In any case, historians have always taken this line, and will take it, as necessary for any fruitful investigation.

It may be thought that at the outset of this enquiry it is needful to discuss the question of free-will. In reality, it matters very little whether the historian adopts free-will or determinism as his philosophy. His subject is human action, and the most enthusiastic adherent of free-will must admit that human action is not entirely free, that it is constrained by the action of other individuals, by the inherent limitations of the agent, and by natural and logical boundaries. On the other hand, the sternest determinist will allow that motives often evade human scrutiny. Both, therefore, allow that part of human action falls outside their principles. In the part that the voluntaryist abandons, the historian may find room for the action of his laws; nor need the part yielded by

the determinist be left to the dominion of incalculable chance. Even where the action of the individual is incalculable, the action of the crowd may have a common direction and a common aim. Statistical methods may be applied to reveal the existence of these or their absence, and thus, even in the arbitrary part of human action, guiding principles may be discoverable.

Buckle, indeed, went further than this. He is the protagonist of all those historians and politicians who appeal to the known laws of history to support their own theories and to repel those of their opponents. Unaware, like the men of his time, of the limitations of natural laws in such studies as chemistry or physics, he sought to extend to history the certainty which he attributed to the other sciences. His work is ingenious, brilliant and perverse. But he never understood that before we argue from the past, we must discover it; and that before we claim for history the rights of a science, we must rigidly determine the nature of its logic and know with what sort of a science we have to deal.

History, viewed as a science, can only be regarded as an inverse science; its followers are continually employed in reasoning from what they know and see before them to what they have never known and never can see. As in all inverse sciences its problems are capable of many solutions,

and the selection of the right answer from the many possible answers is at once the difficulty and the delight of the historian. The conception of an inverse science seems to be one that many minds seize with difficulty; and yet it is one that the child meets with in the earliest stages of its education. The first arithmetical process that we learn is addition, a direct process, which can always be carried out; the second is subtraction, the inverse process, which cannot always be carried out, because it is inverse; and though by the introduction of the new conception of negative quantities we evade this impossibility, we do not really escape from it. Any child can readily learn to solve the direct problem of finding the sum of several numbers; $7+3+2+1=13$. But no one can solve the inverse problem and tell us what four numbers added together will make 13. The only answer that the most expert arithmetician can supply is that the possible number of solutions is indefinitely large. Offer him another condition, for instance, that the numbers are all integral and positive, and he will reduce the possible number of solutions to a smaller and manageable extent. He will even, if pressed, tell you how many conditions he requires to be able to reduce the number of solutions to one; and he will warn you that, by fixing too many conditions, you may render the problem insoluble. But the original problem, the

pure inverse problem, always remains one to which no certain answer can be given.

So it is with the historian. From a set of facts presented to his consciousness he is compelled to work backwards to a preceding set of facts, which is purely hypothetical. The number of possible solutions is indefinite; the selection of the most acceptable one is the peculiar task to which he dooms himself. He must remember always that history is an hypothesis to account for the existence of facts as they are.

When writers of history refer to this view of their study, they usually speak of it as arguing backwards from the known to the unknown. But curiously enough, this phrase is limited in use; the writer who is speculating upon the early history of land, or on early legal institutions, will use it and speak of its use as a new mode of investigation. If he is candid, he will explain the limits of the method and its peculiar perils. He may even admit that the student who uses it may sometimes find himself assuming a condition of things as known in order to deduce from it a preceding condition that he hopes may have existed; but he is not likely to point out that all historians of necessity pursue the same course, and that the man who takes a story on the authority of another investigator is arguing from the known to the unknown just as much as the man who breaks new

ground for himself. And what is more, in using existing authorities the student is liable to exactly the same errors as he is when exploring new paths. In short, tradition, whether embodied in writing, or transmitted as oral statement, is only an existing fact, which may be used as a basis for investigation. Its peculiarities require special criticism, and its limitations will soon be obvious to those who rely too much upon its help. It is not needful here to discuss a theory of testimony, but it is needful to insist on the fact that even if we base our history upon tradition, we are still only framing an hypothesis to account for the existence of things as they are; and that herein lies the peculiar difficulty of our task. It may be said that this difficulty is common to all scientific studies. It is no doubt true that the business of constructing a theory to include any set of facts is a matter of lucky guessing, and that many guesses are always possible. But in the case of most of the accepted sciences, the student has one great advantage over the historian. The phenomena with which he deals can be repeated at will; the circumstances under which they occur can be varied in as many ways as the investigator can devise. But no historian has yet discovered how to experiment with history. It is tempting indeed to imagine an historical laboratory, in which, under the care of skilled investigators, experiments should be

tried upon different forms of societies and knowledge gained and theories tested. One might study the actual effect of prolonged war upon national character, and endeavour to settle, by repeated experiment, whether it improves men and women by inspiring them to bear hardship, or lowers the vitality of the race by killing off first the bravest and best among them. But all this is at present beyond the historian's power; and perhaps should be beyond his wishes, even in moments of scientific exaltation. He must, however reluctantly, leave experiments to chemists, physiologists and professors of physics, and fall back upon what methods remain to him.

From one science he can obtain especial assistance. The limitations of the historian apply equally to the geologist; indeed, in one respect the geologist is in even worse case, for geology is a younger science than history. When the seas were parted from the continents, no man stood by to watch; and no man saw how the earth's surface was folded into the mountain chains that build up her aspect. Earth as she is, is the subject-matter of geology; how she came to be what she is, is the object of his researches. His observation of the actual processes of change, the tradition of his study, scarcely extends over more than two centuries. And yet in that short space of time, geologists have framed, discarded and recalled

many theories. For the present purpose, the noteworthy point is the slow recurrence towards a theory of catastrophes after the almost complete triumph of the doctrine that all geological changes could be accounted for by causes now in action; and an increased tendency to deal historically rather than descriptively with the whole subject. The result of the two tendencies is to produce a remarkable parallelism between the language of historians and geologists. The following paragraph from a geological book will show the likeness of the two lines of thought.

‘ THE DIFFICULTIES OF GEOLOGICAL
RESTORATION.

‘ These arise chiefly from two causes—the imperfection of our knowledge, and the imperfection of the geological record. The first is being gradually removed by the industry of geologists; but there are still many parts of the British Islands about the geological structure of which we really know very little, and there are many others about which more detailed information is much to be desired. . . . The imperfection of the geological record is another great source of difficulty and one which will never be altogether overcome. The rocks which remain to us as the records of any one period are but a remnant of the deposits which were formed during that period, and yet before we can attempt to restore the geography of that time, we must replace in imagination the

rocks that are lost so as to form a conception of the space over which they originally extended.'

The quotation need not be prolonged further; there is no historical investigator who has not said the same thing in words but slightly differing. It need not surprise us to discover this; both geology and history are inverse studies; both have to face the difficulties that attend all inverse studies; and both have to determine whether they will take for their guide the principle of uniformity, or will allow themselves to have recourse to catastrophes in case of need.

When the geologist talks of uniformity, the historian is apt to use the word development. This term is a useful servant when it is not employed as a screen for ignorance. But too often when we say that one state of things has developed out of another, we ought simply to state that a change of some kind can be discovered, and that we know neither the nature nor the method of the change. If the change is a large one, our dislike to admit ignorance may lead us to postulate a catastrophe, another term frequently used in a loose manner. Sometimes it means a change, the magnitude of which is inconveniently large for its duration; sometimes it means a change thrust upon a country by violence from without; sometimes, and most correctly, it means the turn of the scale, the final stage of the conquest of old

conditions by the new forces, which have long been held at bay by the inertia of existing facts. The only accurate use of the term catastrophe is the last one; and before we use it we are bound to examine the growth of the new forces and the reason of their victory. Often this is an obscure, even an impossible, task; the whole truth eludes us. But it is always possible to prefer ignorance to blundering; and it is better to admit that we do not know the origin of the Reformation than to adopt the catastrophic view of the school-girl, who declared that Luther began the Reformation by burning the Pope's cow.

The controversy between the school of uniformity and the catastrophic school is an unreal one, and is chiefly concerned with the choice of the terms we shall use to conceal our ignorance of the progress of events. From one point of view, all change is uniform; from another, all change is discontinuous. Either method of statement, either line of thought, is valid for the discovery and expression of truth. The historian who discards one or the other of them limits himself to no good purpose.

The familiar story of the Norman Conquest will serve as well as any other as an illustration. The forces which brought William and his followers to England had been at work for many years. The resistance of the English had been weakened by

the long tragedy of the Danish war and the failure of Canute's attempt at conquest. From this point of view, the Norman invasion and its success are nothing but the final result of uniform and intelligible processes slowly working to an inevitable result. The historians who talk of the incompetence of the English as the cause of William's victory would be better employed in pointing out that the Norman victory was won against a people exhausted by their long, and on the whole successful, resistance to the Danes.

II.—DIVISION OF THE MATERIAL

1. CHRONOLOGICAL.

But for a time we will turn from method to material, from the discussion of forms of thought to subject-matter. It is always well to begin at the beginning; and the beginning of history is the present day. The subject-matter of our study is all about us, the face of the earth as it is, the traces of man's activity upon it, and all the accumulations of books, houses, pictures, talk, stuff described and undescribed, languages, mountains, rivers, canals, races, theories of conduct, and cemeteries, all existing together and as yet unclassified. No theory can account for the existence of these things that does not base itself upon the knowledge of them all; no mind, however encyclopædic, can possibly acquaint itself with even a large fraction of them. We must divide to conquer, and we must remember that all division has its dangers. Let us begin by considering a division according to time. No non-existent thing or fact has any history, except as an unrealised

conception in the mind of a projector. And in consequence as we work backwards, we shall find the mass of our material steadily diminishing, since year by year the mass of accumulating fact will diminish. An historian interested in Cæsar's campaign in Britain need not consider the history of the South-Eastern and Chatham Railway Company. But we must beware lest the predominance of the present lead us astray in both directions. A notable and scholarly historian in the fervour of composition has been known to attribute the fall of Chateau Gaillard in the reign of King John to the lighting of a fuse, presumably in connexion with a mine of gunpowder. Nor would it be difficult to quote instances of the post-dating of the origin of other facts with equally unfortunate results. But if we select such facts as have ascertainable dates, like books, buildings, documents, and in general men and their products, we can often safely fix planes of section by which we may divide our subject-matter chronologically. These planes will differ with the nature of our subject. A plane, suitable for general history, will not be convenient for the history of a particular country. The selection of them is a fine art, and a good test of the skill of the writer who chooses them.

And here we must note once more the peculiarity of our subject. It by no means follows that

Because we can exclude from our survey all facts that came into existence after a given date, that we can also find a similar plane before which we need not look for material. An historian may reasonably say that in writing the history of medieval thought he will consider nothing that was not in existence before the year 1453; but he will find it very hard to assign any earlier date and say with equal confidence that he will consider nothing that came into existence before that year. And yet it is clear enough that certain facts can and must be excluded simply for the reason that their influence had sunk into insignificance before medieval men began to think at all. But here the opposite error is the more common. Men would far rather believe that fresh thoughts and fresh institutions have sprung full-grown from the brain of some great man; they like to believe that at a given moment the world was made new; they like to see in the past what they wish to see in their own times; a sudden destruction of the old trouble and ignorance and the sudden birth of new energy and light. One party will tell you that the Norman Conquest gave England an enlightened aristocracy in place of an effete democracy; the other side will insist that with the fall of the Bastille the down-trodden serfs of Europe regained their manhood. Each in their inmost hearts hope for a like event in their own

days; each will be disappointed in the present, and both are in error as to the past. These so-called epochs in history are not dates from which institutions begin; they are not even always dates at which institutions end. They are points at which the historian must use the most careful observation in order to discover whether anything did either begin or end there.

It will be seen that part of the historian's task is to establish a scale of time. To a large extent this is done for him by other sciences; and he can use the results of such studies as archæology, which may be defined as the orderly arrangement of monuments, as a basis for his own work. Astronomy will also give him fixed points from which to reckon. But he will soon discover one difficulty, namely, that in history the conception of the uniform rate of time is of little value. The length of one century of history is not equal to the length of another. Ultimately time is a measure of change, and historic change varies enormously in rapidity; and in the selection of epochs this is an important principle.

From these considerations it may appear that in our backward explorations of time we may often choose sharp divisions to start from; but that in every case we must determine separately how far back from the starting-line we must go. We have to get to the roots of the subject; and some will

be deeper and some shallower. How far we ought to go is the question to be determined; nor is it susceptible of solution by definite rules. The spade, which is the great destroyer of pure historic theory, is always turning up evidences to show that we must go back further than we wish. No one nowadays dares think of Romulus and Numa as men thought thirty years ago. And even Agamemnon and Achilles seem less mythical than they did. The only rule that can be given seems to be this: never stop in your backward explorations so long as you can discover an organic connexion; never skip back a hundred years or so and assume, without proof, that an organic connexion existed.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL.

So far, then, we have spoken of the division of the material of history in time; but there is another classification that may be added, that of space. Normally speaking, the materials from which we should infer the history of an area should be found in that area. This is not wholly untrue; it is even a good principle to begin upon, but it has its limits. The history of Greek sculpture cannot be written without the materials in Greece; neither can it be written without materials that have wandered to Naples, Rome, Paris, Berlin, London, and New

York. The best specimens of Anglo-Saxon coins come from Scandinavian or Roman sources. The restless activities of mankind have left nothing that they could move, in the place where it might be looked for. And so it comes about that we must classify our materials by their place of origin rather than by their place of deposit; and hope rather than expect that when these are not the same, we may be able to discover from the place of deposit the place of origin. Assuming this to be accomplished, the next question to be settled is this: What rules, if any, can be given that will enable the enquirer to limit the space area in which he must acquaint himself with historic material? The answer can only be indicated generally, leaving particular cases to be worked out by each enquirer. The ease and frequency of communication between the various areas is the main key. Under modern conditions it would be difficult, if not impossible, to assign limits to the area of enquiry. There is at present no part of the world whose history may not conceivably react upon the history of any other part. The gradual extension of the Empire of Europe over the whole world has made all frontiers artificial; and future historians will find the task of writing the history of single States more and more impossible, and the result of their attempts increasingly unsatisfactory. The natural bias of all men

towards the glorification of their own neighbourhood, their own language, and their own past, will do much to conceal from the conscience of a writer the conviction of intellectual sloth. He may even be led to choose such subjects as may require him to confine his studies to his own country.

But this destruction of barriers is a modern phenomenon; and if we step back to the days before the growth of commerce, we can limit our areas of investigation without much difficulty. We can set ourselves down at London, or Paris, or Rome, or any other spot, and consider the area of the world that would have been known to us at the time. Beyond that area we need not go. Nor need we feel compelled to extend our survey of materials even over all that space. The measure of the mutual influence of separate areas is the amount of human intercourse between them, and where that is small and limited in character, we may neglect it, unless it forces itself upon our notice. There is, however, one method that transcends the classification of materials according to space and time, and will do something to supply the place of experiment. The comparative method of historical study is a powerful and fascinating engine, too powerful to be rejected, too fascinating not to require caution. If we can only be sure that the conditions are mainly alike, and that their differences are ascertainable, it can be used with

important results. But its rash application has been a most fertile source of error. The study of ancient history has been kept back for years by the eagerness with which scholars seized on comparative mythology as a tool to unlock the meaning of obscure and half-forgotten story. Nowadays it is hard to remember the time when nature myths reigned supreme; when Sarpedon, Odysseus, Agamemnon, Perseus, Romulus, and King Arthur were all sun-gods; when Helen of Troy was the evening light and Paris the dark power which steals her from the west.

All these discoveries of the comparative method have faded from our minds; and it is easier for us to think of the *Iliad* as founded in history than as arising from perverse allegories. Nor was it only in the dawn of history that the comparative method built frail edifices not destined to endure. It would be a curious task to take Maine's works and see how much of those exciting and stimulating books remain alive to-day. Not all indeed have perished; but one has an uneasy feeling that the strongest part is that where the comparative method is least in evidence. No one would now apply the Roman doctrine of the father's power over his family to explain Indian family law; and the village community as a key to manorial institutions has long ago broken in the lock it failed to open. But in spite of these and other failures,

the comparative method still rules in certain fields; the early history of religion, the early history of society, are still dominated by it; and the harvest customs of Bohemia have analogies found for them among remote tribes in the interior of Africa. The learning and ingenuity of the scholars who pursue these difficult enquiries is beyond both doubt and praise; the value of their results, one sometimes fears, is conditioned by the absence of other sources of knowledge.

But the comparative method has its acknowledged triumphs even in the ages of history. No student of political or social institutions can undervalue it, whether it be used to suggest hypotheses or to destroy them. The analogy between the State and the living organism has often been pressed to an absurd extent; indeed, some writers are apt to remind their readers of the fantastic description in Spenser's *Faery Queen* of the castle of Alma, which is so strangely fashioned like the body of man. But this much truth remains: every State has functions to discharge towards the individuals forming it, and these functions require that specialised departments shall exist to perform them. And so just as one can study the comparative anatomy of vertebrate animals, one can study the general institutions of political communities; one may even anticipate the time when the methods of morphology may be applied

to political and administrative history, provided that we keep well in mind that a political community is a much less definite conception than a vertebrate animal. The great benefit of this way of looking at such subjects is that it helps us to escape from the domination of mere names and leads us to look at things and institutions as they work.

In this way we may attain in a small measure to the power of repeating our phenomena, whose absence we have already seen reason to regret. The institutions of European towns are an excellent subject for the application of the comparative method. The constitution of many towns can be ascertained; it is possible to lay down fairly definite conditions which a group of householders must fulfil before it can be regarded as coming within the category of a town; and the various departments of corporate activity are not very widely different over a pretty wide area. Let us see what the comparative method can do for us in this favourable field. As to the origin of the corporate life of the group, one must regretfully admit that the comparative method has produced little more than an acute state of controversy. Pretty nearly every function that a fully organised municipality can exercise has been seized on by one scholar or another as the essential soul of the town idea. One writer will fasten upon the power

of a town to protect its inhabitants from external force; another will point to the economic importance of a market and the resulting special law for the government of those coming to it. To one authority the special town law grows out of martial law applied to a permanent garrison; and to others the distinctive mark is to be found in a special grant from the King of a portion of his own peculiar peace. A special law, a special commerce, a special safety, and special duties and privileges; these are what every town has tried to get, and there is no need to doubt that all the motives have played a big part in town history. Yet the original cause of the existence of any particular town remains as hard a nut to crack as it did before all these ingenious scholars began to quarrel over it.

But abandoning this thorny field of the origin of towns, let us look at their history and see how much the comparative method has here accomplished. It is not too much to say that there is scarcely a municipal institution which its application has not helped to explain. No better example of this can be found than Miss Bateson's research into the laws of Bréteuil. Here the comparative method has revealed that the municipal code of a small town in Normandy was brought into England at the Conquest, and became the model for the constitution conferred upon many other boroughs in England and even in Ireland. The results of

her investigation have been criticised, and the comparative method may have led her astray in some points. But with all deductions made the research remains a curious and striking success.

3. BY SUBJECT.

It is not only by time and place that we can classify our materials; there is another and even more important criterion, that of subject. Fundamentally the subject of history is the whole of human effort; the object of the historian is the discovery and the presentation of the whole life of man in the past. But to grasp this whole we must first understand it analytically; and before attempting analysis the general point of view from which we are to survey it must be selected. To some minds the investigation of the past is an opportunity for passing moral judgments upon the silent and unheeding dead. To others history has no concern with ethics, and they aim at a disinterested and impartial statement of the facts. A third view insists on the knowledge of the mind of the time as the first essential for right judgment; and the more enthusiastic followers of this course seem to see in the spirit of an age the force which has created not only the medium through which it should be viewed but even the age itself.

The writer, who deliberately puts from him the

task of forming and expressing moral judgments, excludes from his survey the history of ethical development. But it is better to do this than to plunge into Carlyle's error and deliver hasty and violent judgments for the mere sake of judging.

Apart from the general ethical view, we can note at least four lines of historical investigation which in the present day demand attention. There is the old well-trodden path of political history, the story of the rise and fall of States, the history of the parties within them and the growth and effect of political thought. The subject even yet is not exhausted; undiscovered tracts yet await the explorer, and the interest of the interplay of human character and ambition will always attract to it the writer and reader. Close to it lies the field of social and economic history, less attractive and less interesting to most minds, and yet not less important to the student. It offers to him this advantage and excitement, that each new inquirer must find his own way for himself. The peculiar danger of this line of research lies in the too eager hope for some discovery that can be represented as an explanation of the modern social and economic conditions that lie about us. The golden age that lies in the past is almost confessedly the goal towards which these students strive. They seek in the past weapons to use in the struggles of the present,

heedless of the truth that even the most impartial student can only approach the past from the standpoint of the present, and that all are sure to find in that hypothetical region the argument they need for present use. And as in the Stuart times roundhead and cavalier wrote English history to suit their own needs, so nowadays labour-leaders and socialists study eagerly the history of the condition of the people of England in past times; and discover in their studies the origin of modern troubles and their appropriate remedies. Apart from these two and yet close to them lies a third region: that of the history of laws, institutions, and administration, the history of how things happen. The political historian will tell his readers of the Battle of Poitiers, how the armies met and fought and how the Black Prince led away the captive King of France; the social historian will talk of the economic and social effects of the war. But it is to the student of administration that we must turn to know how armies were raised and fed, how campaigns were financed, and how the machinery of government was organised. The time has scarcely yet come for writing a general history of English administration. Bit by bit the main lines of thought are being laid down, and some day we shall be able to guess, not only what happened and why, but also how these things were accomplished. Legal

history is more advanced; and is, indeed, of special importance. In the first place a lawsuit is a stated case, a constructed drama of the kind to be discussed hereafter. An examination of decided cases will show what the definite opinion of the time was upon the questions at issue; and these questions will be moral, economic, or constitutional, according to the nature of the case. It will also show what questions were in debate. Legal history will not tell the whole story; in the first place law rarely deals with controverted questions until they are submitted to it; and this submission may not occur until the controversy has gone on for many years. The condemnation of a heresy will not give the date of its origin; a constitutional doctrine will not be laid down by a competent court, so soon as it has entered into men's minds. In the same way law necessarily lags behind opinion; and legal authority may express for many years ethical and constitutional principles that have passed away. But within these limitations the value of the decisions of the courts as a collection of agreed and tested cases is immense. No historian can afford to neglect to enquire whether his views of a period are in accordance with the views of the lawyers of the time.

But besides Political and Economic History we can indicate, if we cannot strictly delimit, another field of inquiry which has no satisfactory name,

but may be called either Social History or History of Civilisations (the German 'Kulturgeschichte'). Here we are not directly concerned with the fate of particular communities or the succession of political or legal forms, nor yet with the action of Economic Laws. We have to deal with the history of a nation, or even of the civilised world, so far as intercourse makes it one, from the spiritual rather than the material side. The difficulty of this task lies in the multiplicity of detail which its execution demands. The history of this or that science or art can be written. Philosophy, Poetry, the Natural Sciences, Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, and so forth. But can we lay hold of what they have in common? Can we write the history of Hellenism, of the Renaissance, of the Eighteenth Century, in such a way as to give an account of the growth of knowledge and ideas, the impulses and checks which have operated simultaneously on all branches of human activity? A mere congeries of technical histories is not enough. The path seems to lie in the study of the influence on given societies of particular ideas; and this study leads insensibly into the borderland of history and biography where we have to deal with the relations of groups of men expressing common tendencies in different media. It may be suggested that this synthesis is not always possible; that it is only at certain times that the

mental attitude of a particular group is so concentrated that it can be dealt with in this way; while at other times the many divergent currents of thought are incapable of any simple expression.

III.—CRITICISM OF MATERIALS

So far we have spoken of the nature of historic material and its possible classification, and of the chief ways in which the historian may arrange his study. There still remains a most important topic, the principles of criticism. How are we to know whether the materials on which we desire to found our hypotheses are capable of serving as a base for them? How are we to test our hypotheses when they are framed?

Now, all historic material falls at once into two great divisions: material intended for the information of posterity, and material intended for contemporary use; and each of these classes may be again divided roughly into material intended to express the truth, and material intended to produce error. These classes are not, however, sharply divided; and there are certainly cases in which it will be very hard to say definitely on which side of the border-line a particular object should be placed. A few examples will make clearer the principles of classification and its difficulties. It is, for instance, plain that all

histories, chronicles, biographies, and literature in general; all epitaphs, monuments, memorial inscriptions, triumphal arches, and the like, fall into the first class, and are mainly intended for the information of posterity. On the other hand, all official documents, legal documents, private letters, the contents of tombs and rubbish heaps, all buildings other than what the Germans call 'Denkmäler,' and most earthworks, can be put into the second class as matter intended for contemporary use, or at any rate not primarily intended for the information of posterity. There are, however, obvious cases of difficulty; a familiar instance is that of Mr. Pepys' diary. To all appearance he wrote this purely for his own amusement; he wrote it in a cypher devised by himself; he put into it matter that it is hard to imagine a sane man writing at all, and that no prudent man would have wished to be published. One would without hesitation assign it to the second class of materials. And yet if we except the cypher, all that has been said of Mr. Pepys' diary could be said of Rousseau's 'Confessions,' which no one would hesitate to place in the first class. With these two instances in our minds it is hard to deny that all autobiographies must be on the border-line of the two classes. Or to take another case—that of the private letters of great men and women. Often, when they were writing,

they must have reflected that in all probability others than their correspondents might read what they wrote. This feeling must have modified their words and even influenced their thoughts; what was meant for contemporary use, insensibly slips into something meant to influence the opinion of posterity, and we have another set of materials on the edge of the two classes. In some cases, indeed, the classification fails entirely; and it becomes necessary to admit that particular material was intended to be used for both purposes. But in most of these cases a closer scrutiny will show that the information of posterity was in reality the predominant motive, and that in consequence such material may most safely be dealt with from that standpoint.

The principles that must guide the student in his criticism of materials intended for the information of posterity are fairly clear. His first task is to consider whether the intention of the author was to express truth or to induce error, or whether he was simply stating a case and so combining error and truth into a tempting mixture. It is not often that a writer sets out deliberately to deceive posterity or even his contemporaries. But when he does so he often achieves fame—until he is detected—and afterwards notoriety. The elaborate web of truth and misrepresentation that Sully left the world in his 'Économies Royales' is

scarcely yet disentangled by the critics of that monumental political pamphlet. And on a less heroic scale one might point to many a history of a noble family in which it is hard to say where flattery and blundering pass into conscious fraud. This last may seem a harsh word, but too many cases of forgery and falsification are known for us to exclude the impossibility of intentional fraud. Fortunately, the skill of the trained critic is in most cases greater than the skill of the falsifier. Probably the forged 'Itinerarium of Richard of Cirencester,' due to the ingenious vanity of Professor Bertram, has succeeded in deceiving more antiquaries than any other work of its kind; and, indeed, traces of its identifications of ancient Roman stations are still discoverable upon the Ordnance map. The forged 'Donation of Constantine' has its place in history, and affected men's minds for many years before criticism rejected it. In most cases the blunders of the forger are apparent, and an examination of the document reveals some internal inconsistency, some sign that the man who drew it up knew something that he ought not to have known at the supposed date of the document, or did not know something that he ought to have known.

The criticism of forged documents does not end with their detection. Not many men forge from pure delight in their own skill; and a forged docu-

ment is normally the result of definite causes. A study of these causes will show that in many cases the contents and even the wording of a plain forgery may be genuine. The rules of the English Chancery compelled the applicant for a confirmation of a charter to produce the original of the charter to be confirmed. Now it may often have happened that this condition could not be fulfilled; the original had disappeared, and the only evidence of its contents was a transcript in a register. The only course open to the applicant was to prepare a forged original as accurately as his powers would allow. His chief difficulty would lie in the least important parts of the document, the very parts in which a modern critic would discover the marks of the fabrication. The result would be a forged document containing genuine facts. In the same way a demand for authoritative statements of law may produce forged codes containing true statements of law. The moral aspect of the matter does not concern us here; all that need be noticed is that the statements in a forged document are not necessarily false. The amount of truth contained in such evidence must be determined in every case. Nor must it be forgotten that it is not always easy to discriminate between forgery and mere blundering.

The unconscious bias of a writer can usually be corrected by a knowledge of his prepossessions,

and by a study of the sources of information at his disposal. Unfortunately, in the case of early writers these facts are for the most part not to be ascertained, and we have to fall back upon more general lines of criticism. The importance of the principle of uniformity in inverse sciences has already been mentioned; when it is used as a basis for criticism it is often called the principle of common sense. That such a basis of criticism is necessary and useful everyone will admit; but the application of it is not free from difficulty. When we assert that common sense enables us to affirm that a particular event cannot have occurred, we are really asserting that we know more or less perfectly all the types of events that can occur; and it is not likely that we really do possess this knowledge. And we may take further warning from the fact that those critical historians who are fondest of the method of common sense are prone to the most extravagant blunders. No one has used this principle more brilliantly than M. de Voltaire; no one has used it more perversely. There was nothing, on earth at any rate, that his philosophy did not embrace; and in consequence he chose to account for the occurrence of Syrian shells in Burgundy by supposing that the innumerable hosts of the Crusades had brought them back from the East in their baggage. This was an hypothesis that he could believe; the hypothesis

of the deluge he would not believe; and the theory that a common sea might once have stretched from Jerusalem to Dijon was hardly in his eyes to be differentiated from that of a Noachian deluge. This, of course, is Voltaire and common sense at their weakest. It is better to consider him when dealing with the tragedy of the Knights Templars, and solemnly setting out eleven reasons for doubting the truth of the charges against that Order, or when gravely declaring that he suspects the truth of the story of Gessler's bonnet and Tell's shot at the famous apple. But in its strength or weakness, Voltaire's use of common sense is an interesting study. And it is particularly interesting because Voltaire and Herodotus are almost the only two historians who use the principle in an open fashion, telling us what it is that they find in their authorities, and that they deem some other explanation more credible.

When we have assured ourselves that the material we are using was not intended to produce error, and when we have made what allowance we can for the natural bias of all men to blunder, we can take the next step, and consider the sources of our material. If we are dealing with a modern historian, he will, if he knows his business, provide us himself with that information. If we are dealing with a chronicler or a writer of memoirs we shall have to find out these things for ourselves.

This is principally a matter of discovering and examining the sources at the disposition of the writer; and in particular of noting whether he has simply copied his predecessors or adapted them, or whether he has endeavoured to harmonise them. There are two main factors to be determined in any case—the credulity of the author and his power of restraining his own imagination. A credulous writer will set down all that comes to his knowledge; and an imaginative writer will supply gaps in his information by means of such inventive faculty as he may possess. In imaginative historians, we can sometimes trace the growth of a theory in an author's successive works, and from the stage when it appears in an essay, as a happy suggestion, to the point when in an authoritative volume it is presented as an established fact. In the same way, if we are dealing with credulous historians, we can amuse ourselves by examining the way in which, by a process of Russian scandal, some obscure event is slowly transmitted into a more and more terrible shape, until an unknown prisoner in a French prison becomes a twin brother of Louis XIV., and a mask of velvet becomes one fashioned of sheet iron. It will be seen that the criticism of materials intended for the information of posterity is a difficult and complicated task.

If, however, we turn to the criticism of those materials that were produced for contemporary

use, the task is at once simplified. Documents designed to induce error will be found; forged deeds are common enough in monastic chartularies; documents drawn up by statesmen for purposes of negotiations between rival States are not always models of accuracy. But in the main we are dealing with matter that must be honest, if it was to be of any use to those who prepared it. Two defects it has; as it was not intended for the information of posterity, it will often fail to tell us what we most want to know. Again, it will be formal in character, and the careless user may mistake the form for the substance. Not very long ago, certain official letters, written by the heads of departments to subordinates, used to conclude with the form, 'I am, Sir, Your Obedient Servant.' Centuries hence, some historian may be led to strange conclusions by relying on this phrase; even as historians of to-day have deduced equally strange conclusions from the fact that, in a formal document, a particular ecclesiastic was termed a devout and learned man, or a baron on the verge of rebellion described as the king's beloved and faithful friend. These are simple instances; but more refined examples of this kind of error can easily be found. The formal allegations of a lady suing for a decree of nullity of marriage have been used to throw light upon her character; and an alteration in ecclesiastical

policy has been deduced from the fact that the chapter of a cathedral church 'postulated' a new bishop instead of 'electing' him; while in truth the change of form simply implies that the new prelate was already a bishop, and so required no election but only an urgent invitation. In using official documents the danger of common form must always be suspected; in legal documents it is even more insidious. The only chance of avoiding error is to write in every note-book the following motto: In using legal and official documents as materials for history, we are using them for a purpose for which they were never designed. The application of the comparative method here will be of the greatest service.

IV.—ULTIMATE PRINCIPLES

It is not enough to collect materials and to learn to interpret them, unless a guiding principle can be discovered. In the end, all our conclusions must needs be based upon individuals and the character of individuals; and so we come to the question of the permanence of human character. Can we reasonably assign to men in the past the same motives that we know to be active in our contemporaries? Can we assume that those motives produced in them the same results that we see produced among us to-day? If we cannot do this for individuals, can we do it for groups? Let us begin with the easier task, the character of a group or nation. The definition of the term 'group' need not delay us; all we require is a set of men united by language, neighbourhood, and any other of the usual links that make up a community of similar persons. A difference in political or religious institutions need not necessarily imply a difference in character; at any rate it can often be allowed for in considering the main object of enquiry, namely, the group point of view.

Now, there are several matters upon which the group point of view has clearly changed completely in historical times, and there are others upon which it has changed in appearance and expression though perhaps not in reality; one such point is the question of slavery. No educated civilisation in the present day could base itself upon slavery; the cultivated and leisured classes of to-day have replaced slavery by industrialism. The possibility of slavery depended upon a wide difference in knowledge, in courage, in union, between the slave-owner and the slave. As this difference faded away, slavery faded with it. Industrialism lies too near us for it to be profitable to discuss here the conditions of its existence and its probable duration as a social form. Another of these changes was summed up by Sir Henry Maine in a famous phrase, when he said that the progress of society was 'from status to contract.' To-day a man is born into the world free; he inherits from his parents no legal or social condition, and even his nationality may be matter of doubt. His relations with his fellows are assumed by him of his free will by agreement not conferred upon him by accident of birth. This is the age, in fact, of contract; in the days of 'status' a man received at birth his legal clothing and retained it all his life. Now it is undoubtedly true that, from a legal point of view, there is much to be said for this

theory; in every body of law the proportion of the space given to the law of contract, as against the law of persons, has increased considerably; and whole classes of persons have disappeared from the lawyer's sight. If we leave on one side nationality, marriage, childhood, and a few other matters, there is not much left in the way of status that the law needs to investigate. But the lawyer's point of view and the group point of view are by no means the same; and the divergence between the two and their mutual influence are a curious matter for historical study. When Maine wrote men believed in the growth of freedom, and in free contract as part of freedom. There are signs that this view no longer prevails, and that a reaction against it has been going on for a long period. Just as the ideal of equality before the law overthrew the theory of status, the more modern ideal of equality before social and natural conditions tends to bring it back in a modified form. The conception of a naked individual, acquiring a social clothing by means of free contract, gives place to the conception of an individual for whom a social clothing must be provided by the society of which he is part. And so in late legislation there has been a tendency to enlarge the law of persons again. But there is this difference: the old status was a status which the individual could not cast off or acquire. The status

of modern legislation can be abandoned or acquired within the limits of the will or power of the individual. To-day the new doctrine is finding opponents; whether they are the last upholders of a lost cause, or the leaders of a new reaction, will be known in the future. There are not a few other matters upon which a history of opinion might show a growth and alteration in this group point of view, and various attempts have been made to find a general expression for the changes. Here we are only bound to note the fact that the group point of view differs in different ages, and to insist that in historical investigation we must take this fact into account.

If we turn to individual minds the position is a different one. Here we have to deal, not with the steady slight pressure of many forces acting in one direction, and often only to be detected by the sum of their cumulative results, but with the isolated forces of single minds. Anyone who has ever played at table-turning will know the difficulty. The condition that the table should turn is that the large majority of the players should unconsciously push in one direction; if the unconscious pressure alters in direction, the table will move the other way. This is the group point of view, an unconscious majority pressing in one direction, quite irresistible while it lasts, and equally irresistible when it turns back on itself.

But the individual is another matter. And yet, evade it as we may, it is to the individual that the historian must come at last, to his character, his motives, his desires, and his powers. If a change and growth be admitted in the group point of view, it follows, indeed, the same change and growth must be discoverable in the character of individuals. And yet it is more than doubtful whether any varieties of human character have disappeared during the ages of which we have knowledge, or whether any new types of character have come into existence. The motives that act on men have altered but little; their intellectual powers remain much as they were. The fundamental riddles of philosophy, religion, ethics, and art, are the same, and the same answers are given to them. There is no question that has provoked attention in the past, that may not conceivably arise again in the future to demand an answer; and there is no reason to suppose that a new and final answer will ever be forthcoming. In one respect, and in only one, has the position of the individual man been altered. In the last three centuries he became with increasing rapidity the owner and controller of the store of energy accumulated in the earth. With this new mastery has come a new freedom and a new vigour. What his ancestors dreamed, the present race has achieved; and with this achievement came an impatience of delay—an intoxicated belief that

modern man had only to desire in order to possess; and, finally, the disposition to use for any purpose, however evil, the power he had obtained. And yet it remains the truth, the consoling truth, that the essential individual remains much what he has always been.

V.—PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The final stage of historical work consists in the use of the discovered facts and their presentation in connected form, in such form that they can be applied as part of human experience. There is a school of thought which holds that with the discovery of facts the task of the historian ends, and that the use of the facts so discovered does not concern him as an historian. The answer to this contention is to be found in the mouth of every statesman and in every newspaper. The appeal to history will be made, whether the historian likes or not. It is often made ignorantly and perversely, and it is as much the duty of the historian to control it as it is the duty of the geographer to resist the paradox that the world is flat. His task is, indeed, more difficult, and the very impartiality, which is his first duty, makes it more unwelcome to him. But the main line of argument is clear. He must lay down a definite conception of the nature of historical law, and the rules for its application. The first step to this is to consider the meaning of the statement that

we possess a knowledge of a connected series of historical facts.

Now the best answer to the question, 'Do we or do we not understand a particular set of historical facts?' seems to be: Can we construct a drama corresponding to those facts? If we can construct such a drama, we may say that we understand them; if we cannot, we do not. The drama so constructed will not be the full truth; but so long as it covers the field, it will enable us to correlate our facts, to fit new facts into their places, and to note other new facts that we ought to endeavour to discover. Such new facts may prove the falsity of the provisional drama, and enforce its reconstruction. The new drama then made will be a better approximation to the truth; and when, if ever, we have made the best drama possible, then we may rest assured that we are as near to a true hypothesis as we can attain. But even an incomplete drama, that only admits certain of the known facts, may have its uses. It is valid within limits, and within those limits may be used as freely as though it was universally valid.

It must not be supposed that what is here called a constructed drama need be in any fixed form. The best form is a matter of selection in each case. Nor is artistic handling a requisite, or indeed of any especial importance. All that is required is a framework of expression into which the facts

shall fit in their most convenient relations and their most intelligible shape. This framework is what the investigator must supply, since the bare isolated facts will not do it for him, will not always suggest it. A simple instance may serve to define the conception; and as the working of the process is naturally most apparent in administration, we will take a case of that kind. On the Charter Roll of the eighteenth year of Edward III., m. 4, there is an enrolment of a grant to William Chauntmerle, and his heirs, of a yearly fair at their manor of Dalwod, co. Dorset; and this is followed by a note stating that this grant is made by writ of privy seal. If we look among the writs of privy seal we shall find a letter sealed with the privy seal, telling the Chancellor to make such a charter. These are the facts, with which, if we like, we may rest contented. If we want to go further we must construct the drama something as follows: William Chauntmerle is the first character; for economic reasons, he desires to establish a fair, and acting on the advice of someone, he communicates his desire to the King. We have already got a new character—the advisor—and a new document, W. Chauntmerle's petition to the King, which may, or may not be, still in existence. The petition is conveyed to London, or to the court; and the conveyance is another scene in the drama to be filled up in the most convenient fashion.

It is not likely that W. Chauntmerle or his messenger will give the petition into the King's own hands, but he may give it to the King's secretary, a new character in the drama. The King will probably hear of the request from his secretary, and say, 'Let him have it, if there is nothing against it,' and the secretary will note on the petition that the King approves it. Someone will take the petition to the keeper of the privy seal. It may be W. Chauntmerle himself, or it may be an official messenger. Either dramatisation has its conveniences, but the discussion of the question would take too long here. A clerk in the privy seal office will put the substance of the petition into the form of a writ addressed to the Chancellor, and get it sealed; and again in some uncertain fashion that writ will go to the Chancellor, Robert of Sadyngton. There will be some business as to fixing the proper fine payable, in which the officers of the Exchequer will be concerned; and finally, in the presence of the Chancellor, the Scaler, with the aid of the chaff-wax, will affix the great seal to W. Chauntmerle's charter and transfer it to the clerk of the hanaper, from whom W. Chauntmerle or his representative will obtain it on payment of the fees and charges due.

The series of events here dramatised is of little historical importance. But it is worth while noting, that the drama here set out is derived

from two different sources. In part it is based upon the particular facts first set out; in part it rests upon knowledge of a general kind. The next question is, 'What is this general knowledge?' The obvious reply is that it is knowledge of the normal course of a transaction of the kind. But a little closer consideration will show that this knowledge is not directly obtainable. The word 'normal,' the words 'of the kind' presuppose that we can discover a type and classify the types so discovered. Now if this operation—and it is a single operation not a double one—is performed, it can be performed in the following manner: Let us suppose that the collection of the facts is completed, that the most convenient drama of them has been constructed. If this drama is to be used as the source of knowledge of the normal course of transactions of the kind, it must be generalised by the removal from it of all particular names, incidents, indications of time and place, and the like, until we have got to the precise point of generalisation convenient for the purpose in hand. The simpler and shorter it can be made the more convenient it will be; the more complicated and the longer it is, the more valid it will be. The test of the validity of the generalised drama lies in its application to other sets of facts. If, for instance, we find that the establishment of other fairs falls within a generalised form of the

constructed drama given above, we can use it with confidence, increased by each new correspondence. If cases occur which will not correspond, we have the choice of altering the drama, or saying that the case is not true to type; two resources to which even the investigator of physical phenomena will occasionally betake himself.

Now it has already been pointed out that the possible solutions of any historical problem are many; and it is, therefore, always possible to construct more than one drama for the particular facts, and more than one generalised drama from the particular drama. It is in the recollection of these principles that the historian will find his defence against error. Even the simple instance given above might have been stated in many different ways. The validity of such a statement does not necessarily prove it to be true. If, then, we use such generalised dramas as a means of prediction, we must expect to fall into error. But our error will in no way differ from the error into which a chemist may fall who applies so-called chemical laws to a new substance; though for various reasons it may easily be greater.

In the first place, we have to deal with results that are not susceptible of quantitative or arithmetical tests. No historical calculus should be imaginable even by the most convinced statistician or sociologist. In the next place, the errors of

observation to which even the most careful historian is liable, are very great; and, finally, the generalised dramas that can be constructed are necessarily long and clumsy, compared with the principles of physical science. But these difficulties need not deter the historian from constructing them. He has, indeed, a further difficulty to face, which need only be pointed out. His generalised dramas must be consistent among themselves, and what is more, they must obey the laws of other sciences, so far as those laws apply. Psychology, anthropology, economics, statistics, and the exacter sciences, have their own laws. The generalised dramas of the historian must either avoid contradicting them, or the contradiction must be noted and explained. Nor must the historian aim at simplicity; even in physics simplicity is no longer a test of truth.

If we return for a moment to the instance given above, it will be clear that the constructed drama is not simple, and that no really simple generalisation from it is likely to be useful. And yet it is a simple event compared to the normal historical problem. The drama of the French Revolution, or even of certain episodes in it, can hardly be said to have been constructed. Its generalisation is still a matter of speculation. One historical law is supposed to have been strengthened by it, the law that revolutions end in autocracy. The very

brevity and simplicity of this statement might in itself provoke scepticism; but it is used without hesitation by many writers and more speakers, and applied unhesitatingly to future events. For this reason it is a good example to take. The assumptions seem to be something of this kind. It is assumed that we can determine the nature of a certain number of events in the past, and assign them to a common type. It is assumed that we can generalise these events in a manner that enables us to recognise that type as a revolution. The same assumptions are necessary in the case of the social form that succeeds the revolution in time. We have to know the events, to assign them to a common type, and recognise that type as an autocracy. How far these assumptions can be made, is a question for a critical historian in each case. But assuming that they have been effected successfully, we may then state our law as follows: If a particular set of events corresponds in all necessary particulars to the type established and recognised as a revolution, we have some reason to expect that the succeeding set of events may correspond within unknown limits to the type established, and recognised as an autocracy. No historian who has considered the difficulty of the task here laid down will be surprised if this correspondence fails. The value of these generalised dramas or laws of history does not lie in their

power to help us to predict the future; it lies in their power to enable us to connect and understand the past.

The rules of historical thinking may be summed up as follows: The historian must recognise the inverse nature of his study. He must collect his facts just as any other student must do. He must apply to those facts the critical tests and methods appropriate to each case. Finally, he must express them as a constructed drama; and those constructed dramas, he must generalise to the best of his power. In all he does, he must remain aware that his work is provisional. Truth is his aim; but complete truth he is not likely to attain. He can only do his best to avoid the many sources of error that will lie in his path. Lord Acton has said that an impartial historian can have no friends; but even at this cost the historian must still aim at impartiality in his conclusions, and in the statement of them.

Finally, the historian has the task of presenting his results; but this belongs to the domain of rhetoric, not of logic.

Before we turn to the bibliography of the subject it may be useful to deal very briefly with certain matters connected with the subject which have been omitted in the preceding pages, but which play a considerable part in some of the books to be mentioned.

The reader will find that many writers on the subject use freely terms derived from the physical sciences or from biology. Now these terms have been used in many ways, and often have a complicated history in their own studies. And it is, in consequence, very difficult for an historian to be sure that he is employing them in an exact or intelligible fashion, unless he is acquainted with the sciences in which they are defined. It is natural and easy to speak of historical 'forces,' for instance. But until a strict definition is given of the meaning of the term, it is not likely to be of real service. It is only by slow degrees that physical science has reached a clear conception of its own term, and cleared the word 'force' of the misleading and bewildering ideas which long obscured its meaning. If the historian is to employ the term at all, it would be well to begin by defining it, and explaining that his use of it is not a mere unintelligent borrowing from another study. Biological terms are often used in the same inexact and quasi-metaphorical fashion.

No discussion of 'causation' is attempted here. It is often suggested that all history can be represented as a series of events grouped into chains of cause and effect. The difficulty of this conception seems to lie in defining an historical event. In order to introduce the idea of causation, we are compelled to dissect the course of history into

detached portions in order that we may again connect them by representing each as alternately cause and effect. In many cases, indeed, this may be a convenient way of proceeding, but it is necessary to insist that it is only a convenient method, not a logical necessity. It can always be replaced by a constructed drama, or representation of the way in which things happen. This method has at times one great advantage. It avoids that denial of causation involved in the idea of chance which is sometimes curiously spoken of as an historical cause. Now chance in the proper use of the word has a logic of its own, and that logic is not without its bearing on history. But the use of the word by writers on the theory of history suggests that it is simply employed to describe occasions in which we meet with a new event not part of our causal chain, but interrupting it. If we abandon the attempt to construct causal chains, then chance becomes a mere element in the drama, and we escape the task of determining whether a particular detail is due to chance or no. And this may often be a convenience to the student or writer, since we have no criterion to help us to this decision.

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